The subject relating to under-trial prisoners is proposed to be discussed at a conference this month and orders will issue thereafter. The rule requiring the production of encumbrance certificates is not in force now. In regard to the statement that the *nirak* rate is defective, the Government have already asked the Land Revenue Commissioner to see that the rates are prepared correctly. The High Court have recommended to the Government that copies of the Settlement Register, if applied for by the parties, may be granted from the Court itself to which the application is made. This will be arranged accordingly. In regard to the suggestion that a small fee may be levied for a certificate in respect of vakil's fee and for applications for striking cases off the file, I am afraid that those cannot be done under the existing law.

As regards the other points referred to, the difficulties are due to the defective application of the rules. These will be brought to the notice of the High Court for their early attention.

32. Establishment of Village Panchayat Courts throughout the State.

Mr. Uttuppu Chacko (Member, Muvattupuzha taluk) stated that in olden times the custom for the people of Travancore was to manage their local affairs through representative bodies. This system, he said, continued to be in vogue, until the recent policy of the Government absorbed all the administrative activities of those bodies in the central Government. But now the Government were slowly realising the advantages of local administration and the Panchayat was the local body to which they had entrusted the administration of civil justice in petty local suits. The benefit of such institutions, however, was enjoyed only by citizens of a few important towns, where even without them the people could resort to other civil courts. But the people of rural areas were living so far away from civil courts that their grievances could not be redressed, since they could not easily resort to distant courts. The Member, therefore, urged the necessity of adopting a scheme whereby Panchayat Courts could, as in British India and Cochin, be extended to all the villages of Travancore.

President's reply.—Government have no objection to the principle, but the increase in the number of Village Panchayat Courts can be made only gradually, after a full investigation of local needs.

33. Administration of civil and criminal justice.

Mr. C. S. Narayana Aiyar (Member, Municipal Council, Trivandrum) prefaced his representation on the administration of justice by saying that he regretted that the Dewan's Address did not deal with the administration of justice at sufficient length though that was one of the most important functions of Government. He said that corruption had become rampant in the Judicial Department and that the time had arrived for the High Court to set their face against it. He was of opinion that the recent reforms in the administration of criminal justice had brought about a state of declining efficiency as a result of the appointments of judicial officers being made on a communal basis. Again, inexperienced men ignorant of law and procedure were being appointed as Magistrates and they committed a large number of judicial blunders. He suggested that Magistrates should be appointed from among the practising members of the Bar as far as possible, and that the separation of magisterial and revenue functions should be effected as early as possible. Another obstacle in the way of the impartial administration of criminal justice was, the Member alleged, the dominating influence of the Police who overawed the Magistrates and who thought that their advancement depended on the good will of the District Superintendent of Police or even an Inspector. The practice of Head Constables conducting the prosecution of cases which they had to investigate was another evil which caused great hardship and suffering to under-trial prisoners. The Member also complained that, in their anxiety to keep down the file and send satisfactory returns, Magistrates resorted to the illegal practice of refusing to admit complaints presented to them and he instanced the First Class Magistrate's Court, Trivandrum, as one to the file of which the only ticket of admission was a police charge-sheet. He also complained that in that court the depositions of witnesses were not generally read

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